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100% RAG: Architectural Education | THE SCHOOLS, Volume 2, Number 5

Douglas Whitney

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See next page for additional authors

Architectural Education: THE SCHOOLS

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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

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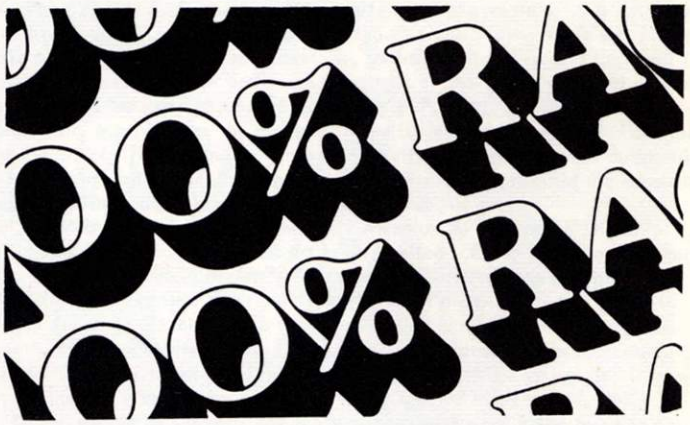


Schools, the theme for this issue of 100% RAG, has brought together comments and interpretations from a wide range of students and alumni. Featured in this issue is an extensive history written about the School of Architecture at Syracuse University. Through a study of archive accounts and interviews, including one with a former dean - Kenneth Sargeant, Douglas Whitney (Class of 1980) has traced the development of our school from its inception in 1873.

Four alumni submissions have been included in this issue. Sheldon Williams (Class of 1972) reviews student activism in the late sixties. His article gives insight into the roots of our current academic programs as well as student interests in politics and change. Kermit J. Lee (Class of 1957), a faculty member at SU, looks at the situation of minorities in architecture schools. Paul Malo (Class of 1955), another faculty member here, takes to task the assumption of "Excellence" in architectural education - the conflict between generalization/pluralism and specialization. The fourth alumni submission is from a graduate of the Class of 1948; Anthony Cappuccilli, now a Syracuse resident, who went to work with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin after leaving Syracuse University. His statements refer not only to his experience with the master himself but with later developments in the school.

The theme of Schools has been expressed in still other forms. Alain Verley, as a student and graduate (1947) of the Beaux Arts School in Paris, describes his experiences there and the school's academic structure. Steve LaFrance (Class of 1980) in writing on the subject of Tenure debates the issues involved and its implications for the School. Richard Becker (Class of 1979) discusses the student in architecture school and how conditioning and stereotyping are an outgrowth of his/her education. Diana Chen-See follows up Becker's comments with an essay that probes a more specific but seldomly discussed problem in professional schools.

The next issue of this semester's RAG will deal with Historians and Critics of Architecture. Featured in that issue will be three essays written by Professor Joel Bostick on Reyner Banham, Professor Arthur McDonald on Colin Rowe, and Phil Persinger on Vincent Scully. With these essays 100% RAG will publish the winning entries to its "...Why ...architecture..." writing competition, the results of this season's basketball league competition, newsbriefs and more.

Gerald Gendreau ■

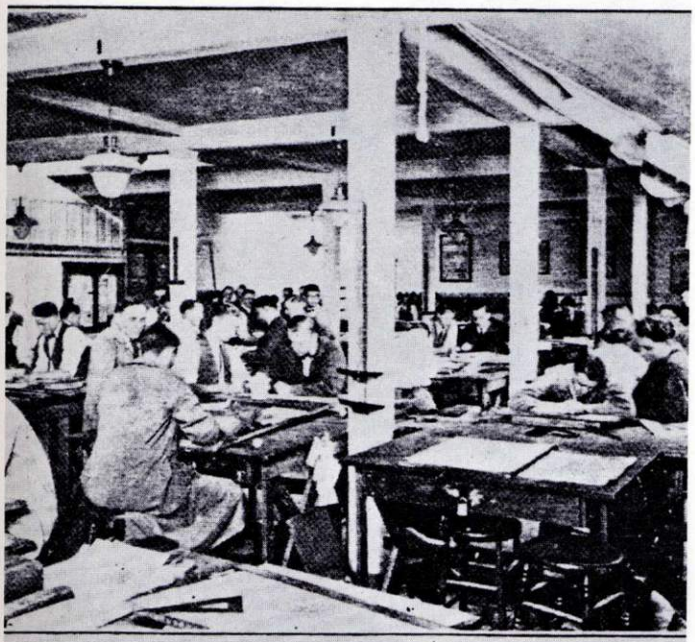
HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Douglas Whitney Class of 1979

The earliest beginnings of Syracuse University took place not in Syracuse, but in Lima, New York. The Genessee College at Lima was thought to be in an inconvenient location and it was decided to move it to the city of Syracuse where it would be easily accessible to the Erie Canal and the New York Central Railroad. As a result, on March 30, 1870, Syracuse University was born.

Architecture was not offered at Syracuse until 1873 when George Fisk Comfort found sufficient support to open the country's first School of Fine Arts. The new department consisted of two four-year programs, Painting and Architecture. Syracuse became the 4th University in the country to offer architecture as a professional program, preceded by M.I.T. , U. of Illinois, and Cornell. The original faculty, Archimedes Russell and Horatio N. White, were "to serve without pay" and aid Dean Comfort in recruiting a corps of teachers from local city talent also willing to work for "art's sake". Dean Comfort " felt confident that support would be forthcoming as soon as the new college had demonstrated its right to live" (Nation).

The courses were planned with the consultation of White, who also designed the first building on campus, the Hall of Languages. The curriculum was described as being a "broad and liberal culture in the field of aesthetics" (Nation). Theories and principles were "not unduly stressed and an imposing number of sustaining courses in the fields vital to the appreciation of the arts were required of all students "(Nation). Such courses as Drawing, Watercolor, Calculus, Physics, Chemistry, History, Rhetoric, Economics, and German are just a sampling of the list. The academic year consisted of 3 terms, the cost of tuition being $33 per term. Board and room could be found in the city for $4-$5 per week. In that first term the size of the architecture student body numbered two.



ONE END OF MAIN DRAFTING ROOM

syracuse university archives

By 1893 the school began to advertise the success of its students and stated " all who graduated from this course occupy exceptionally good positions, those of the present year having been taken into excellent places inthe city " (Manual 1893). This began a provincial tradition of a trade school type which Syracuse found hard to rid itself of later. The purpose of architectural education at Syracuse was "to teach the different styles (Greek, Roman, Gothic, etc.) and principles of design and to awaken inventive and constructive energies"(Manual 1893). One year later the course had been modified sufficiently to bring it into "the spirit of the Ecole-des-Beaux-Arts" (Manual 1894). The biggest change was the emphasis placed on design involving classical theories. The school was located in the newly constructed Crouse College Building, and the drafting rooms occupied the first floor.

Syracuse became nationally affiliated when in 1915 it became a member of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. Along with this membership went the idea of emphasis on the practical phases of education which would be valuable upon graduation. There were four-year courses in architecture, architectural design, and architectural engineering, as well as a new two-year program for "experienced draughtsman". This again reflects the school's concern for the success of its students in professional practice.

In 1919 the school was officially moved to the 4th floor of the Slocum School of Agriculture Building. This newly equipped area included "well lighted drafting rooms and a large display area surrounding the central rotunda" (Bull 1919). Changes were not only made in the school's location but also in the program. In 1936 the 4-year program was changed to a 5-year program. Four years centered on academic pursuits and the fifth year bridged the gap between the School and practice. As was noted by Dwight James Baum, a former S.U. student, the architecture courses taught the fundamentals in engineering, materials and design. Carefully planned to supplement these courses were those in economics, sociology, business and finance. This was the general trend of architecture schools at the time and Syracuse was determined "to keep abreast of the times" (P.P.1936). The biggest change in this year, though, was the hiring of Dean Dillenback, former head of design at the U. of Illinois, and Columbia University. Dillenback, who during his term did much to strengthen the school and its image, stressed the advantages of a wide general knowledge and artistic ability.

In 1940 Baum again appraised the curriculum of the school which he said had "switched from a fine art to an applied science which was concerned with modernism in design". There was an "unusual emphasis placed on working drawings and other practical phases of architecture which would keep the student's mind close to the everyday actualities which must be met". He thought the architecture students of Syracuse, then numbering nearly 100, were being led in the right direction. "The young men (and women) now at Syracuse are not being led up a blind alley".(P.P. 1940) By 1951 the effects of the postwar modern movement were being felt and during graduation ceremonies later that year it was declared that they had finally "slain the dragon of the Beaux Arts". Also in this year the returning 140 students found to their dismay that the 4th floor rotunda, which was open to a central space down to the ground level, had been closed off.

Later in the 50's D. Kenneth Sargent, as dean, carried on many of Dillenback's policies. Sargent thought students could specialize in some fields, but was more important that they gain a broad and general knowledge in many subjects. "There is no one important thing in architecture". Again the value of practical experience was emphasized and students were urged to

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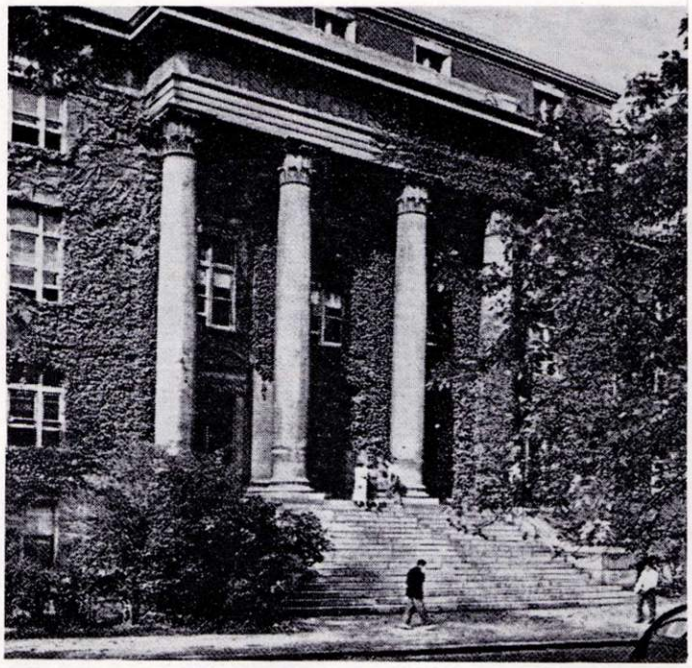
Department of Architecture, Syracuse University

work on construction sites to gain experience. Education became a preparation for a job with reality and logic as the backbone. Architecture was seen as a balance between engineering and aesthetics. Following this mode of thought the School of Architecture became independent of the School of Fine Arts in 1958.

During the mid to late sixties architecture students at Syracuse became intent on abolishing practices which they felt were archaic and adding new ones they felt were needed. A movement was created called the Student Educational Environment Development (SEED) which began as a boycott of classes during which a list of demands was written. SEED involved most of the 205 students and some of the faculty at the school. Some of these demands were for "an intelligent, mature design program, a decrease in emphasis placed on grades, an end to curfew hours on women students, the creation of an assistant dean, and a student-faculty board which would be involved with curriculum changes, faculty appointments and the legislation of school affairs. This action gained national attention and the curriculum underwent close scrutiny throughout the country. The students in the Syracuse School of Architecture demanded a "relevant education" and an end to "dull courses" which stifled creativity (P.S.).

As can be seen in the history of our department at Syracuse, the issue of types and methods of architectural education is a large one that has never been resolved. Should education be that of the art and science of architectural design, or an engineering technology, or something else? Even after a century of experimentation, the answers do not come easily. As long as architecture remains the product of an individual and free man, the questions will remain. ■

syracuse university archives



miron

WHAT PRICE ARCHITECTURE?

Richard E. Becker Class of 1979

If I might be so presumptuous to proclaim: We architecture students are an unusual breed. We work long hours under poor to fair conditions. We suffer the caustic remarks of other students from within the university who view our work as inconsequential and detached. We subject ourselves to professors, some of whom have no business teaching, while others persist in making us the object of their architectural frustrations. Not to mention the sacrifice many of us make in terms of a normal social life at a school which thrives on the reputation of being a party school. On top of all these concessions, we are asked to fork over $5000 per year for five years.

Well, why do we do it? It must be that people become hooked on architecture in the same way that one gets hooked on anything. They find meaning and fulfillment in it. They grow attached to it, realizing that they would not be happy doing anything else. Or they hate it. Or, they have what is referred to as the "love-hate" complex: some good days and some bad days. It's really no different from teaching or medicine or music, the only difference being that the field of architecture has a poor public image and is highly misunderstood; this causes related problems.

More interesting than "why do we do it?" is "what does it (the study of architecture) do to us?". To understand the effects, let's start with the pressure aspect. A lot is expected of architecture students. The School of Architecture is the most difficult undergraduate program at Syracuse University to gain admission to, with one position open for every six applications. Academic standards are high because one, professors for the most part have not succumbed to grade inflation and two, "gut" courses, which can be found in great numbers here at SU, are few and far between at the School of Architecture. Finally, the number and variety of courses required to graduate with a B.ARCH. requires a certain level of competency in a number of fields (it's difficult to get by on design alone).

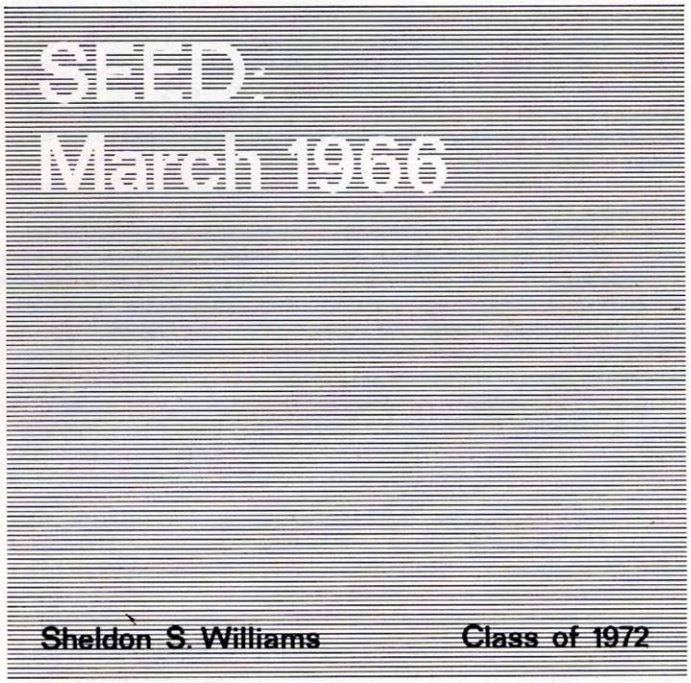
All these facts add up to pressure. This pressure takes many forms: chain-smoking, ulcers, drinking, knuckle-cracking, speed-taking, dope-smoking, psychosomatic illness, frazzled nerves, etc. Of course, before the pressure increases to such a level, many students choose to abandon the ship, thus accounting for our school's alarmingly high attrition rate.

How about our relationships? To typify the architecture student as being over-intellectual, arrogant, slightly off-the-wall, and suffering from an "edifice" complex is certainly an unfair characterization. However, we must face the fact that this is how many of our non-architectural peers view us. This may be the result of our representing a field that has had bad public relations. Or maybe the field attracts people like this from the start. Or maybe the architectural education does this to people.

Architecture students have a way of alienating themselves from other university students. Call it chauvinism or delusions of superiority, but I've heard more than a few extremely critical remarks about other students here at SU. Maybe the fact that we have to trudge up four flights of stairs many times each day intensifies the feelings of bitterness toward our neighbors in Slocum Hall, who are more comfortably situated on lower levels. Could it be the fact that we work weekends and don't know the luxury of having several days to study for a test ? Or that other SU students will find employment before we do? Maybe, deep down, there is the gnawing suspicion that we are giving up more than we will get in return.

Feelings of guilt we might have for leading such a one-track existence are hardly eased by the faculty. Mies, Wright and Corb are raised to the level of deities. Architecture becomes a holy pursuit, not for the weak of heart, not for the socialite, not even for the financially ambitious. Only for the intensely committed, only for those who will give up everything, save architecture. This attitude perhaps springs from the need for faculty to rationalize their own existence--to give meaning to their own sacrifices. The guilt is piled on from other sources, too: parents, future employers, other architecture students, friends, etc. Whatever the causes, this too has its toll on the student. Conflicts emerge that hardly seemed possible when one perused that innocuous School of Architecture Bulletin.

What seems necessary is a realistic perspective that recognizes the "fun" of architecture. That it is human to try and human to err. It is true that one needs commitment for what one loves but life does not end after architecture school. If we can emerge from here clinically sane, with our priorities intact, then we may have survived in spite of existing conditions. And yes, Virginia, Corb did play basketball. ■



It's easy enough to say what happened chronologically. Our second year class had been exposed to more than three semesters of a lackluster academic environment, and had entered the first of three years of intensive technical course orientation (then concentrated in the second, third and fourth years). There seemed to be no cohesion to the curriculum. Design and technics fought for the student's attention, toward what end we did not know, nor apparently did the faculty, at least they didn't reveal the secret to us. Synthesis was left to chance.

During the fall of '65, our class prepared for a spring design project for a "Community Center" intended for Thornden Park, by undertaking research of such a project's implications and requirements as part of a landscape architecture survey course under Bob Mann. Probably this was seen as a step toward interdisciplinary cross-fertilization. At any rate, we enthusiastically pursued the research, opened many doors, and our minds, in anticipation of the spring project. Some social concerns undoubtedly had entered our thinking, though not overtly at that time.

Meanwhile, throughout the fall and winter, there had been considerable discussion and griping- in the studios, in the "Club" in the base - ment of Slocum, and late into many nights - about what we perceived to be the general mediocrity of the expensive education we were supposed to be getting. Something had to be done, but we didn't know what.

As the spring semester began, we made ready to begin the Community Center project, but were handed a design program for a "Teen Center" prepared by our design instructors , that fell short of and contradicted at too many points the ideas we had developed during our research. We were disappointed and wanted the program changed to include our ideas and said so. Acrimonious debate followed over the next two weeks but we were ultimately told to live with the program, because this was not the best of all possible worlds, etc., blah, blah, blah ! One comment made by Mann during the course of the bitter debate, "You're not God, I'm not God, so why even try ?" particularly outraged us for its cynical resignation. It was pointedly quoted anytime someone seemed to waver from the struggle as it later developed.

At about the same time, members of the third year class, which had been through one year more of the same kind of experience, must have reached their threshold of tolerance, for on March 2, 1966, at about 11 A.M. as group of them climbed the stairs from the "Club" resolved to do more than just gripe. Some of us met them at the top of the stairs and heard the idea: an exhibition of sculpture by one of our favorite instructors, Gerry Di Giusto, was to open at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in Utica and wouldn't it be an eloquent demonstration of our dissatisfaction with the educational environment at Syracuse if the entire student body skipped classes and attended the opening of that exhibit on the following Monday ? The idea met with an immediate ripple of excitement- it was bold and gutsy, it implied a search for excellence and inspiration that we couldn't get at Syracuse. But wouldn't the problems of the school remain when we returned ? Shouldn't our energies be directed here to change the school ? So the debate went, and spread quickly throughout all the studios.

By that afternoon, knots of students were gathered everywhere excitedly debating the merits and the form that the protest should take. Faculty members anxiously looked at each other. Ignored by the students, they did not really know what was going on, let alone know how to respond. (This situation persisted long after the initial protest.) Dean D. Kenneth Sargent frantically made a circuit through the studios, the first time we'd seen him there all year.

By that evening a plan began to take shape as enthusiasm grew for the coming protest. A second year leader, Mark Hawkins, prepared a declaration in large block letters on an eight foot strip of brown butcher paper (then an avant garde drawing medium introduced by the gutsy fifth year class), and tacked it permanently on the bulletin board near the Deans office. It was the first thing to be seen at the top of the stairs, (at the time still open and U-shaped, forming a kind of amphitheatre popular for group discussions). It read:

RESOLVED:
That the time has come to face the realities of this school. That the time has come for our minds in freedom to form our convictions. That the time has come when dissension must open the way for exploration. That the time has come for a free exchange between the values of youth and those of experience.
RESOLVED:
That the action can lie only in our hands. That a move must be made to establish the position of our search, and that this search is incompatible with the present system.
RESOLVED:
That we shall create the opportunity for the expression of dissent. Fear is inconsistent with education. Let us determine now the principles of our search.

People began to sign it, adding names weeks later that eventually totaled nearly a hundred signatures (out of 180 students in the school), a remarkable thing, in that those who signed were identifying themselves for possible reprisal.

The greatest enthusiasm was found in the second year class, due to our recent bitter experiences and in the fifth year class, probably the best


'No Revolt'
Architects Boycott
STRIKE!
Architects
Faculty Studies SEED Proposals
By CAROL CARSON
Classes,
Architects
'No Revolt'
DAILY ORAL
Syracuse University's Daily
Newspaper Since 1903
Syracuse, N.Y., Wednesday, March 9, 1966
Dean Balks
At Proposals
By CAROL CARSON
SU Boycott Ends; New Image Demanded
Reports Expected
For Architecture
By CONNIE MYER
Architecture students end SU class boycott
SYRACUSE JOURNAL
Editorial
Page 22
MARCH 9, 1966
PAGE 21
THE GRAND DESIGN:
ARCHITECTS STRIKE
BY MARLENE CIMONS
No Official Word
In SEED Dispute
By CAROL CARSON
Walkout Ends

crosskey

class the school ever graduated, with such outstanding designers as Ed D'Andrea, Bill Reed, Bob Haley, John Benzel, Tom Cullins, and Roy Ettinger. They had the most to lose as they were in the midst of their thesis, only three months from completion, but they had the most to contribute, as they had been through everything the school could offer, good and bad. From them came our symbol with the green circle and our name "SEED", Student Educational Environment Development.

Preparations continued, with plans developing to conduct a boycott of classes on Monday and Tuesday. Friday evening a large meeting was held in the now-demolished architecture studio behind Huntington Hall to plan strategy. There was considerable anguished debate back and forth, with some beginning to have doubts. Several faculty members tried to cool things down and almost suceeded, saying we should be reasonable. One asked, "Have you talked with the Dean ?" Husky Bill Reed replied, "I've been to the Dean on my feet, on my knees, on my belly, and on my ass ! Now it's time to act." He stormed out of the room, jumped on his 900 cc motorcycle, raced the engine and screamed off into the night. This shocked us; we resolved not to compromise- the protest would go on.

Over the weekend, stationery was printed, a post office box secured, and letters sent out to parents, allumni, and noted architects asking for support. Debate on the form and content of our protest continued. Bins were placed on the long shelf in the rotunda for students to turn their assignments in on time, and signs were tacked to all classroom doors asking all students to boycott classes and attend a meeting first thing monday morning at the studio behind Huntington Hall.

The boycott was 97% effective. Most of those few who attended classes did so with our blessing, as they were forced to repeat courses due in part to the very arbitrariness we were fighting. Over one hundred enthusiastic students attended the meeting, which was conducted without a formal chair, rules or designated leaders. Ideas were scrawled on a blackboard and the ubiquitous butcher paper. It was the finest example of participatory democracy I have yet witnessed. By noon the group had broken down into a coordinating committee and seventeen others, each charged with investigating a specific grievance and preparing a report to be submitted by noon tuesday.

Each committee prepared its demands:

- A student-faculty board with an equal balance of power should be set up to rule on all major academic decisions.
- A manual should be prepared for each course, to get the routine subject matter organized and out of the way quickly, leaving more time for creative exploration of the subject.
- A professional code of ethics should be adopted based on a system of "mutual responsibility" in place of the much hated mandatory attendance, graded notebooks, due dates, etc.
- Better coordination between design and construction courses.
- Curriculum revision, dropping redundant or outmoded courses such as Descripti ve Geometry, adding courses on the history of modern architecture and study of modern form and detailing and adoption of student elected "fields of concentration" instead of the single mandatory curriculum then in force.
- A better program of visiting lecturers.
- Development of opportunities for students and faculty to enter into national and other design competitions, including credit for same.
-Better coordination and use of other university departments and facilities by the School of Architecture.
-Changes in the design curriculum including better defined project programs, with opportunity for student discussion and modification: a more consistent and timely judgement system; breakdown of rigid class structure, allowing inter-class projects, co-operation with other schools in the university and with other schools of architecture elsewhere (to break out of the chronic Syracuse isolation): dropping of nine hour sketch point requirements, which had prevented some otherwise good designers from advancing: extension of fifth year thesis to the full year with more than cursory final judgement: establishment of a graphic transcript or portfolio for each student: and an end to capriciousness in faculty judgement of student work.
-Establishment of the position of Assistant to the Dean for Academic Affairs to break down the barriers between the administration and students and to look after the collective academic needs of students and faculty.
- Creation of a regular student publication.
- Elimination of the curfew for women architecure students (Yes, women students were still required to be in the dorms by midnight !).
- Reform of the jury system: improvement of facilities: student evaluation of courses: and establishment of a student co-op store, model shop, and photographic center.

Those were our demands, prepared by the committees in only 24 hours, and frantically gathered together and edited by the coordinating committee Tuesday afternoon at a long table at the rear of the second floor of the Orange (I recall that the Rolling Stones' "I'm Free" was playing on the jukebox). They formed our manifesto of 42 pages, containing more detail than I can possibly account here.

Meanwhile, a threat had been relayed to us that the Dean just happened to be planning a review of our draft deferment status the following week with selective service officials. But the die was cast, and this only enraged us further. We announced plans to present our demands at a meeting of all students, faculty, and Dean tuesday evening at the Architecture Studio. We cleaned up and wore jackets and ties (to show that we were responsible), stacked tables and chairs to form a kind of stadium in the large room, and invited the press. The head of each committee stepped forward to read their part of the manifesto, until all 42 pages had been read. It took 2-1/2 hours, as students, faculty, and administrators listened in solemn silence (Charlie Croom walked back and forth at the rear of the room and chuckled from time to time).

The statement concluded:

We are hereby petitioning the faculty to provide a written analysis of our proposals, in detail, and submit them to us by Monday, March 14th, 1966. All future correspondence with the Student Educational Environment Development will be handed to any student.

We would stress the need for completeness in the written analysis because we have a moral obligation to our parents, alumni, and notable architects whom we have written explaining the principles of our movement. We have provided the incentive for the ideas of over one hundred students offering resources never before utilized to their full potential. The opportunity is here. Our generation demands.

And then it was over. Some anti-climactic statements were made to the press, people chatted back and forth, relieved after six days of tension. Nobody knew precisely what to do next. We went back to classes Wednesday, committees struggled fitfully for a while, the faculty and administration never answered our proposal decisively and things

dissolved into bitterness through to the end of the year.

There was talk of breaking away and forming our own school, but that never materialized. Some of the best people eventually left my class: Bill Melochko for Zurich, Mark Hawkins for Kahn, Rick Hessdorfer to MIT, and Helen Lang and Fay Logan to Columbia. Individually, some of the faculty members adopted a few of the specific proposals we had offered, but basic conditions in the school remained unchanged, and student dissatisfaction simmered on the back burner, finally erupting again in the spring of '69, resulting in Dean Sargent's resignation and institution of the student-faculty board, but someone else will have to tell that tale, as I was no longer at the school. Ironically, I understand that Dean Sargent and some of the faculty with whom we had felt such frustration, had reformed the school considerably in the late '50's and thrown out the classical orders- probably one of the last schools in the U.S. to do so.

As I wrote, a few months after the initial rebellion: "SEED was a time of agonized self-appraisal, righteous indignation, and convulsive outburst of accumulated frustrations." We had gotten sick and tired of exhibition sketches, art gallery, museum, private home, weekend cabin, trademark and logo design problems in an endless stream with few exceptions. We came to regard this narrow range of assignments as irrelevant to the contemporary needs of society. "Vacation cabins for the idle rich," was a phrase often heard at the time, We must have been influenced by the legacy of civil rights consciousness that broke through the placid surface of the early sixites.

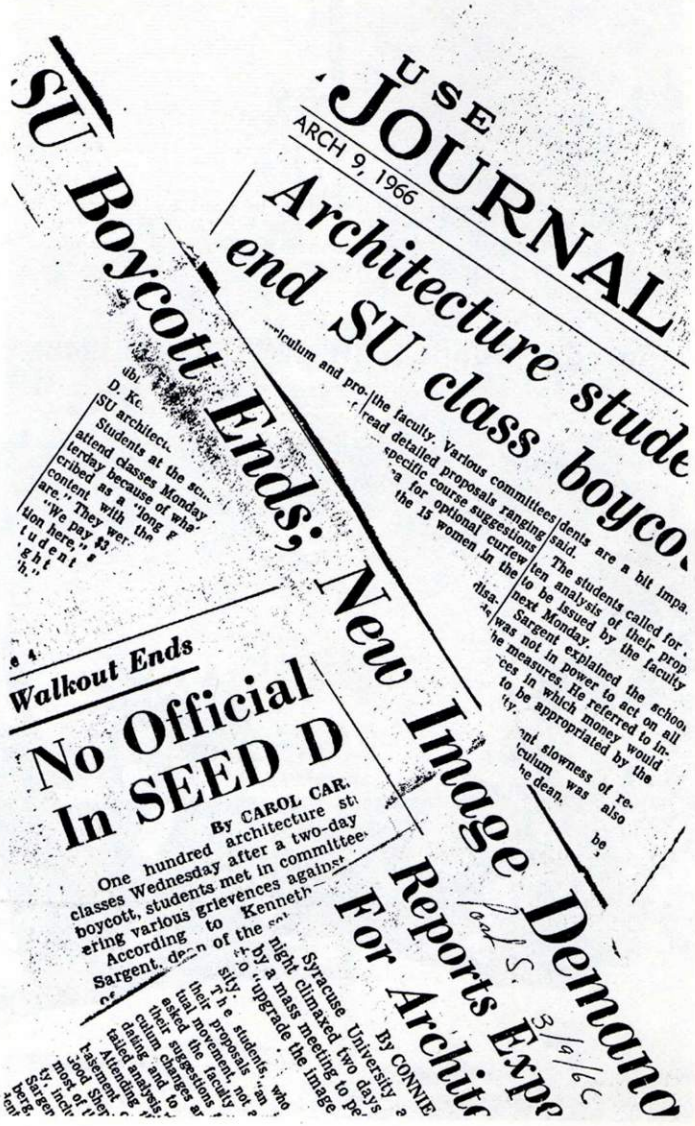
SEED was spontaneous and anarchistic, but has to be seen in the context of its time. "No longer the silent generation" of the fifties, we were the Pepsi generation, entering school full of optimism during the "soaring sixties". Before long the bubble burst. In the fall of '64, the Free Speech Movement in Berkley crashed through the remnants of the McCarthite barriers of the previous decade. Within a year, LBJ's Gulf of Tonkin Resolution plunged the U.S. deeply into its last fatal attempt to achieve Manifest Destiny against an unwilling world. As the death toll mounted, we, as students, nervously looked over our shoulders, barely secure with our deferments.

In the years that followed, riots in the ghettos of Newark, Watts and cities across the country : the strike at Columbia University in the spring of '68 and the assassinations of King and Kennedy: the riot that was the Democratic convention that summer; and the ghastly expansion of the war contributed to the mood in our school that culminated in 1969 in the second rebellion in less than five years. The decade that had begun as the Chamber of Commerce "soaring sixties" ended as the chamber of horrors, strife-torn sixties.

The economic situation was considerably different too. It was easy to get a summer job in an architect's office then, as LBJ's "guns and butter" program of inflationary spending fueled the economy to boom proportions ultimately causing the post-Vietnam War collapse we are now suffering through, with no end in sight. Many of us (a majority of my class by fourth year) gained essential practical experience. This was invaluable in developing our sophistication and ability ta critcally evaluate the academic side of our education. Probably as a result, a majority in my class are now registered.

In general, the Syracuse architectural profession reacted sternly and with alarm to the SEED rebellion. Most felt that we were destructive and falsely said we offered no alternative. I remind all who may harbor such fellings today, that we never once called for the dropping of real standards or abandonment of the pursuit of quality.

I think that the reduced interest of the profession towards the School of Architecture today is a result of the economic slump and consequent surplus of architectural employees. Interest in what happens "on the hill" will resume only if the economy improves and a trained labor supply becomes a renewed concern as it was during the sixties or a lack of economic improvement forces new and practicing architects to a more activist position in society. I believe that the latter is more likely, and will as a side effect tend to reduce the false dichotomy between school and the "real world" that still plagues education in the U.S. and caused the SEED rebellion in the first place. ■



greaves

TALIESIN Yesterday and Today

Anthony Cappuccilli, AIA Class of 1948

It was one-quarter of a century ago I graduated from Syracuse University School of Architecture and ventured forth to join Frank Lloyd Wright. Not easy to enter Taliesin; only after a personal interview with the master himself and much effort on the part of a fellow Syracuse graduate and I, were we able to become members of the fellowship.

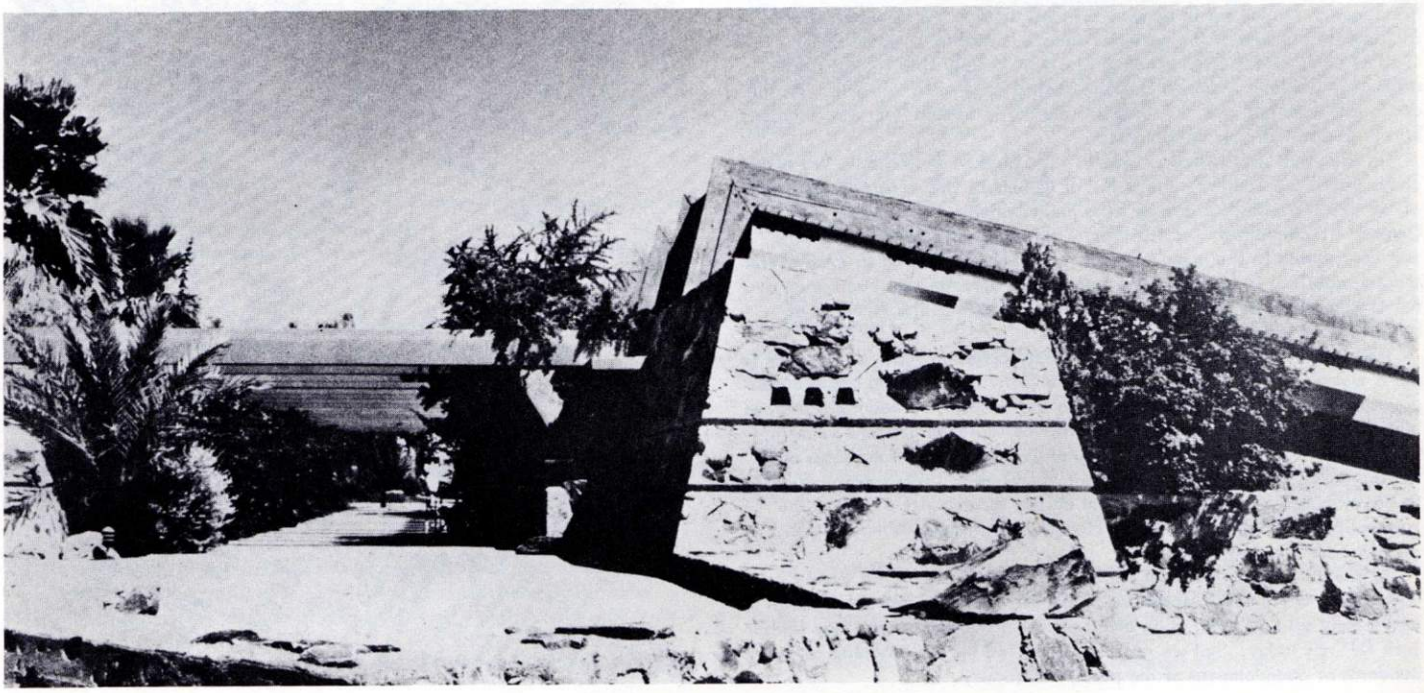
We were with Mr. Wright about a year. The fall we spent in Taliesin East, Wisconsin, and then in December we went to the desert. Upon arriving one of the first things you would do is build yourself a shelter, somewhere near or out aways from the cluster of buildings that made up Taliesin West. I built my canvas shelter about one-fourth of a mile of cactus dotted desert from the nearest building, partway up MacDowell Mountain.

A typical day included getting up early for breakfast and then participating in some effort. In most cases it was helping to build a new structure or rebuilding existing ones. There were efforts that all participated in, such as working in the kitchen, doing housekeeping chores, playing a musical instrument or singing in a chorus; or working in the drafting room.

Drafting room work was usually reserved for people who had been there a longer period of time or had proven themselves to be exceptional in that direction. Senior apprentices supervised the efforts in the drafting room.

The most important part of all in my opinion, was that Frank Lloyd Wright was there and that you were inspired by his efforts. When he designed a new building he would disappear into his study and you wouldn't see him for two or three days until he would emerge with a very rough scheme for a solution. From that time a very capable disciple by the name of John Howe would pick up this scribbled worked over design and proceed to carry it forth to a finalized plan.

Mr. Wright on one occasion walking through the grounds, stopped me and discussed a change he wanted to make in the living room of his quar-



ters. We openly exchanged ideas and arrived at how it would be done. It was great in my opinion that he considered my thinking and we together arrived at an answer that was carried out and worked quite well.

To see how Mr. Wright worked, to be with him while he developed his work and to work on his buildings was an education. There were no classes - you learned by being there, observing and becoming part of this effort.

The following is a quote by Diane K. Shah who was at the Taliesin West foundation in Arizona in 1972:

"A strange place is Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright's imposing memorial to himself. One thousand arid acres, trapped between the creeping lights of Scottsdale and the purple peaks of the MacDowell Mountains. An oasis seemingly as open as the desert itself, yet cloistered as a medieval castle - and run like a medieval fiefdom by Wright's widow, Olgivanna.

Some young architects arrive, never to leave again, reveling in newfound freedom. Others, like Svetlana (Stalin) Peters, flee in terror from the stringent codes of conduct. Strangers flock, hover, and scatter, eyeing the attractions but missing the point. For Taliesin is as much a place in the mind as in the sun."

Today, a quarter of a century later, his famous widow rules the desert fiefdom. Mrs. Wright, her son-in-law Wesley Peters, Jack Howe the faithful disciple/senior apprentice and a few others run the Taliesin Fellowship. They try to have the same basic program that was followed during the days that Mr. Wright was alive, that is, prior to 1959.

Actually today, things are even more stringent. Each day is rigidly planned; breakfast at 6:30 a.m., chorus at 7:15 a.m., construction at 8:30 a.m., Lunch at 12:30 p.m., free-time until 2:00 p.m., then it's the drafting room to work on lettering or floor plans. Tea is served at 4:00 p.m. and some sort of a class program is held from 5:00 p.m. into the evening with a dinner break at 6:30 p.m. Class attendance, strangely enough, is not mandatory but Mrs. Wright does require attendance at her Sunday morning talks in the communal living room. She may play one one of her husband's tapes, philosophize or discuss family problems. The entire community is expected at the black tie Saturday night dinners, which are followed by entertainment, usually plays, dances or concerts performed by residents. Occasionally a movie is imported.

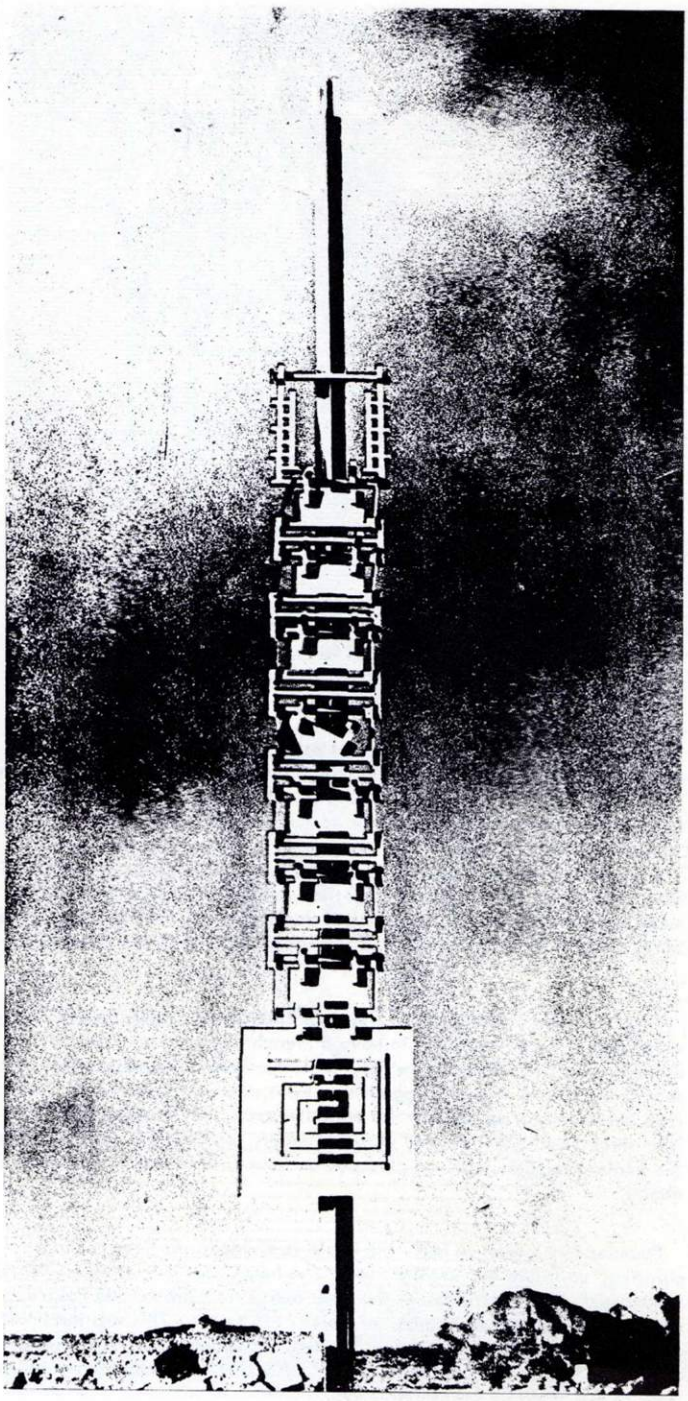
Young men come to Taliesin to become architects but they often find themselves spending more time baking cakes, composing music and leading guided tours that come through every two hours.

There can be no mixed feelings about Taliesin today. Those who stay are addicted. Most at Taliesin feel the same way, insisting that they will stay on even when Mrs. Wright dies. Though some of the students say they intend to leave some day, none can suggest a date. When asked if one might find it hard to re-adjust to real life, he laughs and answers 'You mean adjust to un-real life'.

Frank Lloyd Wright just prior to his death, I believe, was doing the least significant work of his fabulous career. The Taliesin Fellowship today, is taking the many clichés attributed to Frank Lloyd Wright and using them over and over again. In the designs that have been completed since Mr. Wright's death, nothing of real significance has been done. In my opinion, the buildings I have seen published or sketches of their works are overly decorated, modular, and geometric designs.

I'll never forget a quotation of Mr. Wright's concerning some of the people who left the fellowship, "They pick up a few hot coals and run". This is what is happening at Taliesin today. They have those hot coals and are using them over and over again even though the emitting warmth has all but vanished. ■

pignetti



L'ECOLE DES BEAUX-ARTS

Alain Verley, AIA

Professor of Architecture

From an early age I was always interested in buildings and was a very active sidewalk superintendent, watching buildings grow out of the ground. I was fascinated by them. Because of my father's occupation, I lived in Belgium and began my architectural education in Brussels at the "Ecole Supérieure Saint Luc", which in many ways resembles our own school. The school was based on a seven year curriculum: four years of basic studies followed by three years of part-time studies mixed with afternoon work in an architect's office. We had design class in the morning, technical subjects in the afternoon and free-hand drawing in the evening.

After four and a half years of living in Belgium and being French, I decided that it would be better to have a French degree, and I started to prepare myself for admission to the "Ecole Nationale Supérieure Des Beaux Arts de Paris". A friend living on our street who was in the Ecole at the time helped me to prepare for the entrance exam, which proved quite a job, since I had never studied classical orders, and this was mandatory for the Ecole admission. Let me give you an idea of what the "Ecole" was all about:

Founded by Colbert in 1671, the Ecole is divided into three branches: painting, sculpture and architecture. The home base is located on "Quai Malaquais" on the left bank of the river across from the Louvre Palace, close to the Institute of France, of which it is a part. This was the heart of the Ecole until the 1967 student uprising which ended the established traditions, and created ten independent schools. I will confine my reflections to the Ecole as it was before 1967.

Prior to the student uprising ninety-five percent of French architects were graduated from the Ecole, which had an enrollment of about 1200 architecture students scattered throughout Paris and all the major cities of France and its colonies. All programs and juries were issued fr and occurred in Paris; a great asset for those in Paris but not to the liking of people outside the city. I will concentrate on the Architecture Program and disregard joint projects with painters and sculptors of the time.

The Ecole was divided into "ateliers" (studios) under the direction of a "patron" (a well-known architect who received very little pay if any; the position was considered an honor). Three of these ateliers were in the Ecole proper, and the others were scattered throughout the vicinity and in other major cities. Each atelier was autonomous and had its own rules regulations, fees, etc., as well as a very developed "Esprit de Corps". The Ecole, like most "Grandes Ecoles" in France, was free except for an admission fee. Because of the free tuition, the Ecole was enterable only through a very strict competition, and only the best students were selected. To prepare oneself for this entrance exam, one had to join an atelier as a free student in training for the exam, which was given three times a year. Upon admission into an atelier the student became a "nouveau" (newcomer) under the direct supervision of an "ancien" who was called "Chef Cochon" (pork chief). His duties were to see that all nouveaux were at the atelier at all times. The anciens were on duty once a week all day, and they supervised the development of skills in the nouveaux as preparation for the admission examination.

The admission exam was taken by an average group of 500 to 1000 students three times a year, with a maximum acceptance of fifty french students plus fifteen foreigners who placed among the first and fiftieth Frenchmen. It was not unusual to take the admission exam four or five times before gaining acceptance to the Ecole. The atelier helped each student to prepare for all parts of the exam, on which no less than ten points out of twenty would pass. The exam was broken up over a period of ten days. The first day was devoted to design "in loge" without data, composing a small architectural design using classical orders, rendered and drawn to scale in twelve hours. This exam was weighted by a coefficient of twenty. Successful completion of each exercise was a prerequisite for taking the next one.

The second exercise was two eight hour studies, one charcoal medium of a plaster cast, and the next day, a clay model of another plaster "bas relief". They were given a coefficient of five. The next part of the exam included a written and an oral exam on arithmetic, algebra and trigonometry, and had a coefficient of ten. If successful one moved to another written and oral exam in descriptive geometry, which had a coefficient of five. The last exam was designed to test one's skill in French composition, as well as one's knowledge of general history from Adam to the present day, and had a coefficient of five. If one was accepted after this ordeal one became an "eleve de Seconde Classe".

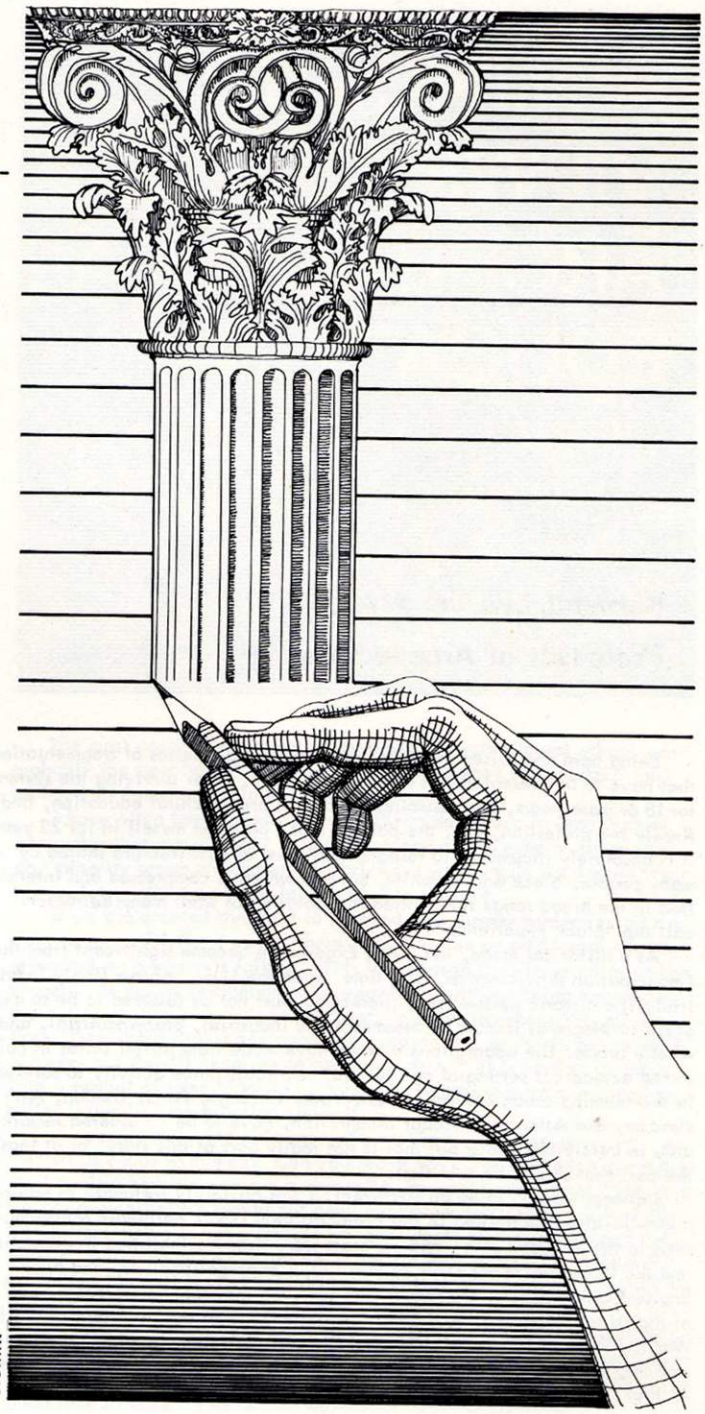
The Ecole was divided into a second class, a first class and a final rundown for the Diplome before graduation. Contrary to American custom,

one did not graduate after a certain number of years, but fulfilled the sets of exercises in an orderly fashion. In the design area of the second class each student had to secure a minimum of three "mention's" in "analytique order", design them, proceed to not less than eight mentions in class B design followed by construction problems, design, and working drawings. Most of the time one had to take three projects to receive a mention. In addition to the design sequence and parallel to it we had stereotomy,(stone-cutting), statics and resistance of materials, wood structure, steel and concrete, as well as office practice, legislation (all civil law), mechanical equipment, freehand drawing and clay modeling. At any time during the year when one had fulfilled all the above requirements, one was promoted to first class. I would say a minimum of three years was needed to achieve this; for some it took five years. The first class was mostly devoted to design and each student had to receive ten mentions, minimum, on projects or esquisse-esquisse (sketches), as well as an additional mechanical equipment course, freehand design and a few others. When all this was completed, first class took at least two years. One was then able to select a subject for one's Diplome (thesis). Design and development of one's Diplome was reviewed by a group of teachers and practicing architects.

On the average, students spent two years, after their baccalaureat, in preparation for entrance into the school, three years in second class, two years in first class and a year for the Diplome. I must add that most students after their admission into the Ecole, worked on a part-time basis in an architect's office (agence), and it was not unusual to have in the atelier some "anciens" older than thirty and still taking part in the activities of the school, helping the "Patron" in his "critique" of the atelier, which meant much peer pressure. Design problems were of many varieties, some esquisse-esquisse (one day sketches), some regular problems lasting from two weeks to three months. Other competitions were of varying duration.

Each atelier had to develop a strong "esprit de corps", and a great deal of closeness developed among the former Ecole students once in the atelier. In my atelier we were over 125 students in conditions very similar to our own (at Syracuse University), with a limited library, not as complete as Syracuse University's. All projects and other exercises were given in loge and each student had to submit a "parti" before leaving. The loge parti was pinned under one final submission for the jury to review. Here, students often were declared "H.C." (Hors Concour), which meant that they were not considered for a grade due to the fact that they had not retained their original parti. I have seen juries where 400 entries of the same project were judged with 300 projects being without reward due to a lack of agreement among jurors. Juries consisted of teachers of the various ateliers and some practicing architects. Programs were written by various teachers or by a small commission of the Ecole.

This is a very brief description of what the Ecole was like prior to 1967; now it has been subdivided into more than ten independent schools, some still floundering after ten years, others well on their way. I am not sure that the division has improved the situation. It may have destroyed a system which had some strong, positive parts along with some weaker ones. Time will tell. ■



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A MINORITY VIEWS ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Kermit J. Lee, Jr., AIA

Professor of Architecture

Being born and raised Black in America sets up a series of fragmentations that have to be presented and attacked squarely. After surviving the system for 18 or more years, and assuming a place in architectural education, and finally the profession, i.e. the pattern that I have set myself in for 25 years, it is absolutely incumbent to respond to a view of Architecture shared by many people, black and/or white, but one which is compressed and intensified in the broad range rather than the isolation of what many detractors call the "Black Experience".

As a historical mode, the Black Experience became significant from the Emancipation Proclamation, at a time when the U.S. became firmly industrial. The historic perspective, therefore, must not be assumed to be so much Black or Negro as it must be assumed to be industrial, post-industrial, and wholly urban. The adaptations that we have made from initial states in balanced ecological setting of agricultural cum subsistence activity to survival in the teeming urban centers of New York, Chicago, Paris, London, Amsterdam, and Atlanta - without recognition, have to be considered remarkable in barely 100 years; but that is not really part of this story, or at least the part that should be told first.

I always wanted to be an Architect. I was obviously fortunate in having a middle-class upbringing in the comparatively stable northeast Massachusetts in the 40's and 50's, and my roots were firmly established in education and the Protestant Work Ethic of Puritans, Congregationalists, and New England Universalists. My family had survived the Depression intact, and at that time, as our national needs were greatest, at the threshold of World War II, those of us with particular skills at a particular level of urban resources, were "allowed" freedom and mobility within the American System. At that, the only role models we had were white American.

This does provide a certain momentum in one's own resolve, and as soon as it is apparent that the cultural mores are not genetic but learned behavior, emulation is comparatively easy. Background tenacity gives one a firm base, the emulated momentum can, in some cases, carry to extremely high levels.

I came into Architectural Education as a student at Syracuse in 1952, with an excellent high school record and some prospects. Dismay and anger, actually adrenalin producing, welled up very often in the first two (2) years; not because of academics, but because of socio-academic pressures, that is: the "place" of Black students in a white, elite professional School. I was told by Dean Dillenback that there had only been one (1) Black in the School's history receiving a degree, and that was in 1926/1927. There were four (4) of us in the 1952 Freshman Class, in September. By February, I was alone; but I was in a spot that had occurred often, and it was clear to me that this profession was as ignorant and as prejudiced as all the others. There was no moment of resolve that I had to succeed, rather there was a reconciliation with my self that I would succeed.

There are no secrets in Architectural Education. If it professes to be taught, then obviously it can be learned. The context and attitude within which it is taught/learned presents other types of attitudes, however. Course material is either pragmatic or highly subjective; information is either clear or obscure; but one learns that relevancies, particularly to the frameworks that we exist in, are hardly ever made! The phylogenetic strength drawn from urban qualities has to be tapped here. There are few things in the entire anthropological history of man that are not current with American Blacks: we have been researched, compared, man-handled, and measured from our craniums (to determine capacity) to our calf muscles (to prove we cannot run long distances) like no other emigrant culture.

(This should elicit many competive and critically derisive comments, but one need only look at our continually frustrated economic position to recognize that mobility, assimilation, and ultimate tolerance is more a function of pigment than of politicalized Affirmative Action).

But it is only that we have clamoured for the visual, spatial, and physical attention that is afforded the monuments of Western Culture-amalgam that it might be... from Moorish Africa to the ironwork of New Orleans, the carpentry at Louisiana, the cognitive qualities of Dogon Villages, the highly sophisticated urban patterns of Upper Volta, Dahmit, Nubia, and the Sudan. There is a coordinate system of the clamour of "The New Culture" on the left and the needs to articulate the anthrophysical and urbane notions of form emanating from a sensitive culture. Acknowledgements of intrinsic and real worth of cultural patterns, of norms, standards, and even of externalized valuations, goals, and values as having a distinct and equitable place in the structure of Architectural/urban Design thought are destructively lacking.

The context for Architectural Education of black pre-professionals is different from that of the white peer group. I hasten to say that the differences do not arise in the content, for there is no "Black Architecture in America", but in the perceptual mode that until recently only included pre-Columbian and Middle Eastern/Asia Minor, Islamic models and the traditional influences of African Art on Post-Impressionism and Cubism. Peer pressures from a range of external stimuli which compress the cultural and socio-economic population from clearly rural to obviously cosmopolitan can cause blacks to "cut and run", particularly when combined with ignorance, intolerance, or outwardly expressed dislike, jealousy, and "superiority" from the white peer group.

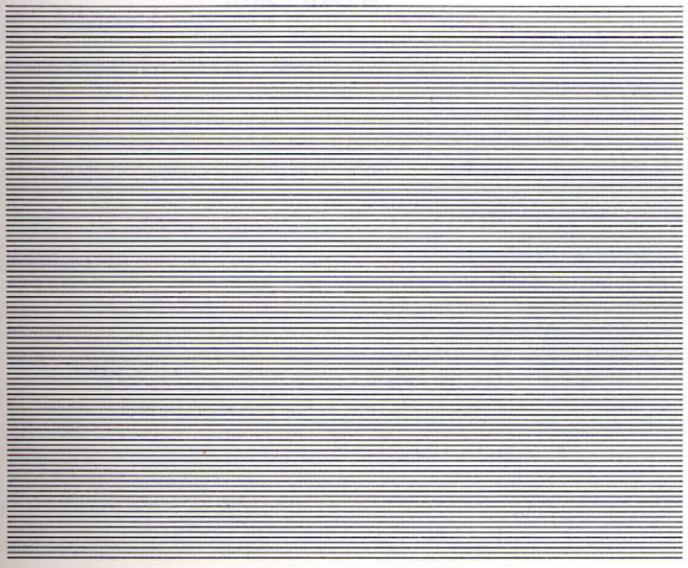
One might say that, "that's the way it is", or, "if you're black you you must be twice as strong, twice as smart, and only half as sensitive" to

survive. One can hardly expect that young people in their late teens and early twenties can serve as role models. Given the dearth of black practitioners; however, Architectural Education has had to serve the surrogate role. If the educational program leaves something out, then it is never noticed until the maturation of the student allows for perceiving the lack and reacts too late, third or fourth or even last year...

This suggests that the curriculum, long the whipping boy of us all, must include some relevancies in attitude, attention, integrity, and efficacy given to non-Western models;some reference and acknowledgement given to socio-economic models that form the functional and occupancy patterns for architecture; and some reference to the professional notion of non-white practitioners. This is not, as I am wont to say, a plea for another course. This is a request for an opening up and a dialogue. This demands that as Faculty, we become more selective and much more "natural" in our course material and our presentation of it; and it demands that the whole student body lose its academic inhibitions, take on a spirit of shared discovery and pay attention to the unique worth that every member of the group has.

Lastly, this suggests that the black students become aware and at that, proud, that there are some black professionals out there. While we are less than 300 registered architects, principals and associates in firms who are black or female, there is a conscious effort to influence: the distribution of commissions, the conditions of employment, and the professional visibility of the black architect, landscape architect, or planner/ urban designer, particularly in a Democratic Administration.

The collective need to be professional rather than resolutely militant is apparent. We survived worse things than the late 60's early on in our passage to this Country, and the transitions to quality and the increase of working professionals in the ranks must be made.At the present increase of graduates leaving architectural schools, compared to the potential of the whole architectural, physical planning market, there are bound to be some radical shifts in employment. These shifts will demand skills and knowledge and not some other implied notions of gift, ease, care, or reparations. The pressures are there and must be met with a certain order and resolution, not the hypertensive mode that actually results in inaction, frustration, and capitulation. Pray for the children. ■



A SHADOW OF A DOUBT

Diana Chen-See **Class of 1977**

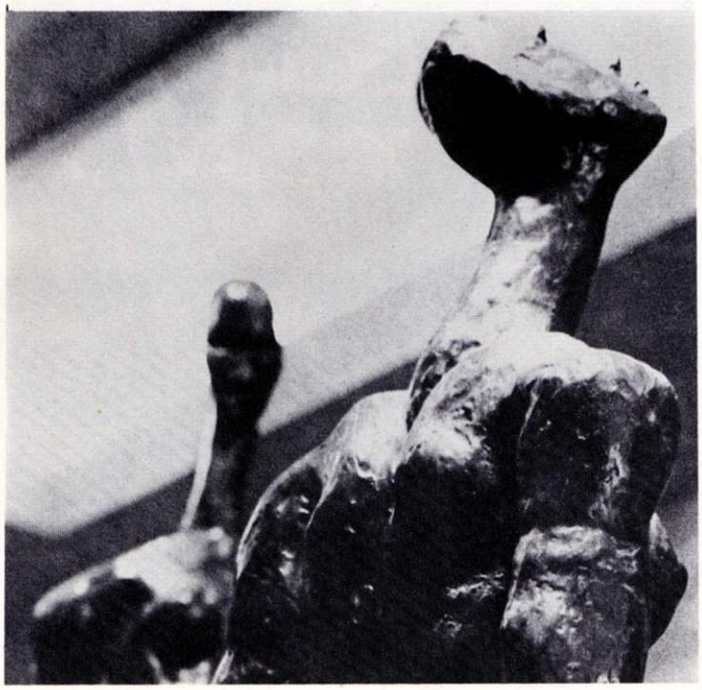
The most succinct appraisal of my being in architectural school was probably the most honest as well: "Are there women architects?" exclaimed my interlocutor in genuine amazement.

I have often been asked, What problems do women in architecture encounter that men do not? I answer, Many of the same problems that any minority group encounters in Christian, white-male dominated Western society, We deserve at least a passing thought.

If we are granted the right to succeed, we should not be denied the right to try and fail. I mean, there should not be an additional stigma attendant on a woman's failure. This is far worse than incredulity at her success. It should be enough to do your best, without being haunted by the notion that you have to be the best, in order to escape the condemnation: "see, girls aren't any good: this proves it." or "girls can make it, I guess; but they'll never be as good as a man." It is hard to be made into a symbol of something; to be forced to represent a race or creed or belief instead of representing yourself.

Some people deny the existence of a problem: "Of course women are treated as equal with men. Can you prove you have ever been discriminated against because you are a woman?" Perhaps I can; if not, lack of a logical demonstration should not deny existence to anything. Discrimination by definition is not a logical thing; it deals with emotions and the psyche, which means a greater potential for destruction. In covert or subliminal form, it is most terrible because it is most subtle: it cannot be resisted openly and therefore remains untouchable.

"It's human nature," one male well-wisher told me once. "Vive la différence! A pretty girl gets up in front of a male jury in a short skirt and they go easy on her. If she can take advantage of her femaleness, good luck to her!" I think this was meant as encouragement.



lee

It is not pleasant to be always placed on the defensive: "If women aren't inferior to men, why aren't there famous women painters, sculptors, architects, etc?" Answer Yes or No. Or in 25 words or less.

Prejudice is debilitating: it is destructive by attrition. A hundred little incidents: the same weary jokes, the same hidden assumptions, repeated ad infinitum:

"Do you know how this works?"
"Yes, I do."
"Well, I'll explain. Basically..."

"Do you know...?"
"Yes, it's..."
"Are you sure?"
"Quite sure. I researched it for a project once."
"Well, maybe I'll just double check with someone else."

Of course, that's only some people. I have been treated "just like everyone else" by a number of professors and students. Some critics are indignant that I am not more grateful for the fair treatment I have received so far. I am told that the condescending people are condescending to everyone.

"Give us the woman's point of view." (Will mine do instead?)
"What if you get married?"
"Do you intend to practice?"
"Why aren't there more women architects?"
"Why aren't there more women in architecture school?" (I haven't the faintest idea. Should I have?)

Loaded questions are semantic traps, and not always immediately apparent even to the questioner. The use of loaded questions is common to interviewers and lawyers, both of whom deal with emotional effects. Refusal to answer a loaded question is commonly taken as an admission that the assumptions behind the question are correct. Loaded questions can be very subtle.

"Do you think you can be a housewife and mother and work full time as well?" (Are you still molesting little children in the street?)
"Nowadays a woman has the same opportunities as a man. So why don't more women take advantage of this? Maybe they just wanted to prove a point."

Sometimes you get tired of explaining things. Especially when apparently direct questions turn out to be rhetorical. After a while you just want to be left alone: to ignore the problems and hope they sort themselves out. A lot of people have been trying to convince you it doesn't exist anyway. Others ask, "Are you another one of those feminists?" or "Do you believe in Women's Lib?" Still others protest "Men get discriminated against too. Women are just as sexist as men." (I suppose this is justification for something, like lower pay scales for women.)

It is so easy after a while to say, "Just drop the subject; I don't care any more. Shut up and leave me alone." But you must care. You don't have to lead protests, take surveys, be vociferous or defensive, but you must be able to recognize prejudices in yourself and in others so that you you do not mistake them for facts. The preservation of your individual confidence and self-esteem is more important than being a figurehead for a cause, an example to prove a point, or a case study for a thesis. If you get discouraged, think of Alice and the Cheshire Cat:

"Cheshire Puss," [Alice] began, rather timidly... "Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

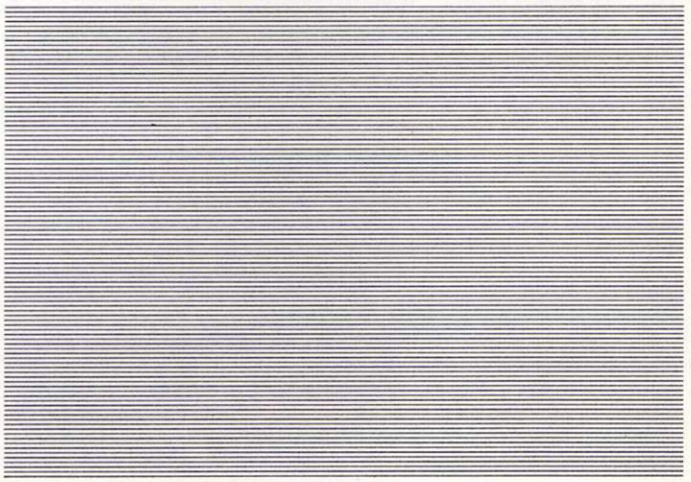
"I don't much care where--" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"--so long as I get somewhere, Alice added as an explanation.

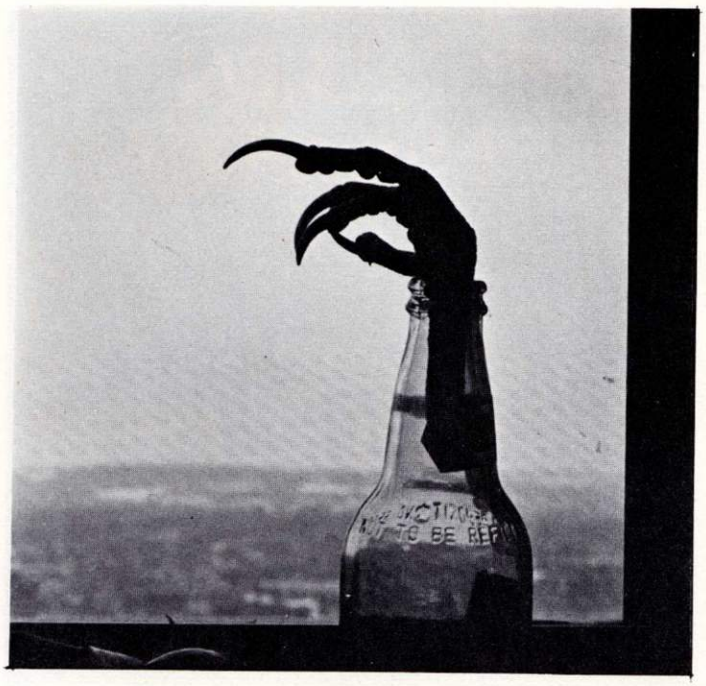
"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

-- Lewis Carroll
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland ■



TENURE DEFENDED

Steve La France Class of 1979



As defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Tenure is the "act, right, manner, or period of holding something (as a landed property or position)." Tenure is viewed by cynics as a means for incompetents to become permanently attached in a legally inaccessible niche. Advocates of the system view tenure as a reward for passing the "entrance exam" which usually consists of a predetermined series and/or combination of one or two year appointment contracts.

The procedure at Syracuse University for tenure consideration is a two- or three-step operation, depending on whether a college has a tenure committee. The School of Architecture is one of the few schools that has such a committee.

Under the present system, "Tenure consideration shall be based on real achievement in teaching, some involvement in creative work and responsibility in service within the school, in addition to the concepts of leadership, cooperativeness and the probable long-term curriculum needs of the school."

After six years of continued employment, one has assumably done acceptable work and expects to be judged on these years of service by peers and students who could vouch for one's effectiveness. The blanket yes/no dismissal of a single professor may have serious, though not immediate effects on a school. Teachers are easily available and voids are soon filled with someone who may or may not be better qualified.

Some advocate the dissolution of the tenure system for the "good of the school." Faculty would then keep from stagnating. Teachers would perhaps receive three-year and then increasingly longer contracts and be considered for reappointment at the end of each contract. Unfortunately the Dean participating in such a system would (if conceivable) have more power than he had in a tenure system. The potential for abuse of this power is disturbing. Short of open revolt, such an unhealthy balance of power could only be opposed by the remaining tenure-bastioned faculty.

Intellectualism is not only tolerant of differing ideas, but feeds on the stimulating debates only possible by maintaining a varied staff. Conscious inclusivism is essential to school vitality. Conversely, exclusivism which would stifle and deaden vitality is pseudo-intellectualism. The interaction of opposing ideas should be between the students and the faculty within a school. Schools should also interact among themselves, not as pure ideological outposts, but as inclusive intellectual conglomerates.

The qualifications of a tenure-seeking employee might be the generation of student enthusiasm through existing methods and by creating new ones. The initiation of slide-show and guest lecture series and the creation of special foreign study programs would stimulate the school by exposing it to the world and would certainly qualify a professor for tenure. It would also be good for an instructor to try to publish articles in architectural magazines in order to get publicity for the school, assuming the energy spent on writing would not detract from his essential in-school teacher/student responsibilities. Shameful "publish or perish" criteria, written or unwritten, should be abolished and forgotten.

Often systems or institutions are handed down to us and appear old and tired. Initially the tenure system may appear the same. Though disagreements may arise as to whether certain professors deserve guaranteed employment for life, we can all perhaps agree that people need real bill-paying security in their lives and that teaching ought to be a means to achieve it. Tenure fills this need for security, and as if through natural selection, has survived for years. ■

IS EXCELLENCE NECESSARY?

Paul Malo, AIA

Professor of Architecture

Plato taught at a gymnasium in the suburbs of Athens known (in commemoration of a Greek hero) as "The Academy". In time the term was used to denote any place of higher learning. The academy became the medieval monastary and the renaissance university. As the body of accumulated knowledge expanded, relatively more concern was devoted to its preservation and transmission, and relatively less was expended on inquiry.

Eventually the term "academic" came to connote pedantic isolation, stressing the reiteration of learned lessons rather than the exploration of ideas. As institutions, academies tended to institutionalize thought, becoming self-perpetuating, closed systems.

It is not sufficient to dismiss academies as archives for embalmed lessons, or as havens for tenured drudges. There is a deeper problem to be probed: can learning, transmitting pre-existing ideas, be congruent with thinking, inventing new ideas ? If not congruent, can creativity be taught? Should a school presume to do so ? How many of the titans of Architecture were in fact academically trained ?

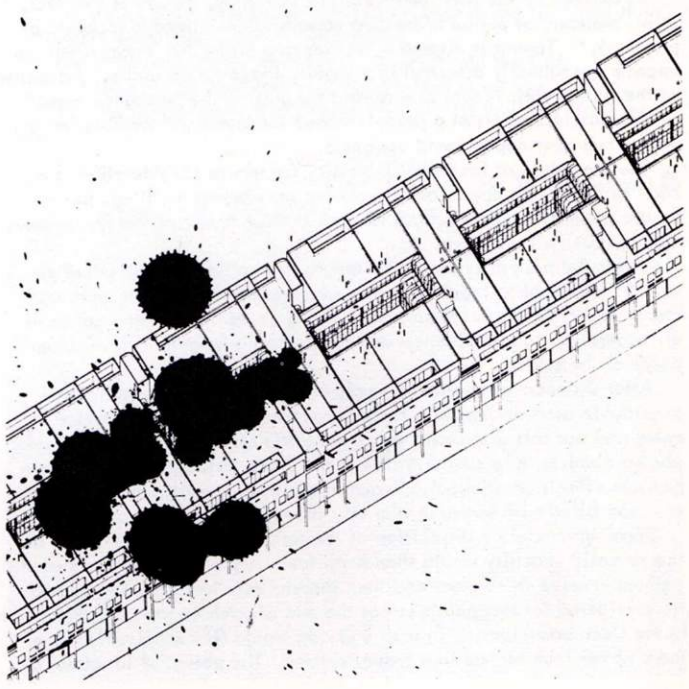
But there is still a more profound problem, and this is a central dilemma for us today: can Architecture aspire to excellence of the individual object and simultaneously be concerned more broadly with problems of multiplicity in the natural and human condition ? Perhaps there seems to be no contradiction on the face of it, but can one really opt for the finest and still intend to serve the most ?

Architecture throughout history has been mostly a product of elite patronage- at least "fine" architecture, as distinct from vernacular building. Our notion of "excellence" is derived from an aristocratic tradition, entailing labor (or thought), intensive execution of unique objects, singular works of art made precious by the investment of human time, energy and intellect. To the ideal of perfect craftsmanship was added another layer of intention in more recent times: The artist should evidence a personal vision, beyond conventional wisdom. He should be innovative, rebelling against tradition. He should be difficult to understand and appreciate, and should disdain popularity.

The academy has found it difficult to reconcile its innate conservitivism with romantic ideas of the artistic mission, but the concept of "excellence" seems to be generally unquestioned as an intention, even though colleagues may differ about what is excellent. Perhaps this very premise ought to be questioned, considering the origins of our academic assumptions.

A few years ago I asked a professor from another university what he thought of Harvard after spending a semester there as a visiting professor. "Not bad for a Beaux Arts School," he replied. The Ecole des Beaux Arts, of course, was the premier architectural academy of its time -a time which passed a half-century ago. Most schools of Architecture in this country followed the Parisian model, but the precedent was not internationally accepted. German schools, for example, instead of enshrining Architecture as a Fine Art, continued a craft tradition, later oriented to technology. I recall visiting one institution in the fifties, and was surprised to learn that the students did not attempt to design anything until their final year. The faculty considered it irresponsible to encourage "design" until materials and constructional methods were fully understood.

Some American schools, such as MIT, have been more partial to an engineering than an artistic approach. In most of America the Beaux Arts ideal persisted, and still dominates many academies. The formalist attitude, in fact, seems to be even more evident today than a decade ago,



greaves

as the more comprehensive concerns of the sixties seem to be on the wane in many places. Does the swing of the pendulum indicate return to fundamentals which are particularly architectural, after a period of liberal, undisciplined diffusion, or is the trend to be read as a retrogression into conservative academe ?

The question may be brought into focus by the notion of "excellence". This is an issue central to education of all kinds, and is one which we must address in our personal lives. Who would object to "excellence" as a goal ? But at what price ?

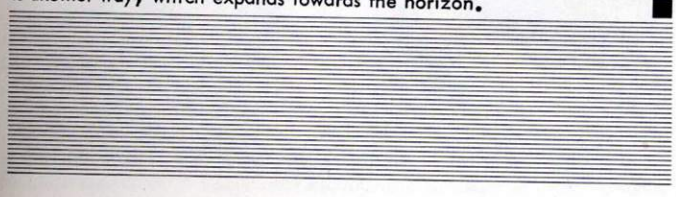
One cannot excel at everything. One must choose. The price of excellence is specialization. Some interests must be denied in order to favor another. I recall Dean Burnham Kelly telling that Cornell had weighed the question and (I gathered by consensus) had opted to specialize in Design. They would recruit students as well as faculty with special potential as designers. He admitted that this policy entailed lesser interest in other areas of Architecture than shown by some schools, but his rationale proposed that the eighty schools in the country might well differ in orientation, some offering more specialized programs for highly qualified students of certain types.

A Cornell influence has been apparent in our school in recent years. It raises not only a question of whether we need two Design Schools in our region, only an hour or so apart, but also it raises the question of whether we have made, or ought to make, a decision regarding whether we are to educate specialists or generalists. The emblem "excelsior" is easily raised, but it is cheap rhetoric until a hard choice is made. If we choose to excel (and perhaps we should not,) at what should we excel ?

We have been a pluralist school, accomodating a variety of attitudes. There is constant danger that a precarious balance of values may be tipped to favor certain interests, should proponents seek security in numbers. Collegiality may be supplanted by hostile factionalism, and individuals who are fine teachers may be sacrificed because of their different views. This often happens in schools, and is a serious threat to any program which intends a middle course. The moment of truth comes with appointment and reappointment of faculty. Do we seek a balance, or do we favor a particular orientation ?

It would seem heretical to question "excellence", so ingrained is it, but generalists, by definition, do not excel at any specialization. They may, however, see the forest instead of the trees, and may be able to put it all together. A faculty which is a mosaic of vaired specialists may be unsatisfactory regardless of the excellence of individual specializations, for if the academic program as a whole is to excel, variety will diffuse its focus. But if a comprehensive view is intended, this probably will not be conveyed by a collection of narrowly concerned specialists. A broadly oriented school ought to have on its faculty some widely educated and widely experienced people who may excel at nothing, but who are wise.

Excellence is strong stuff, and in small doses may be stimulating. But there are values beyond achievement, recognition, and adulation. The shortest route to those goals is a road which becomes ever narrower. There is another way, which expands towards the horizon. ■



OF WIND AND WATER
Chinese Occultism in Site Planning: FENG SHUI

Howard Fiedler **Class of 1977**

When building a house, pulling down a wall, or raising a flagstaff within the China of the past, one encountered the natural science of Feng Shui. It is a religious belief with a peculiar mixture of philosophy and fanciful superstition associated with a conception of existence. In many instances, the European who ignored Feng Shui and built a structure, whether it were a house or road, was struck down by nature. Where such damage had occurred and the precepts of Feng Shui brought into activity, tranquility reigned.

Feng Shui means "wind and water" and is so called because "it is a thing like the wind, which you cannot comprehend, and like water you cannot grasp" . It is a sensitivity that must be felt and lived, for it has no formal definition. Through patience and observation, the Chinese knowledge of the landscape and environment grew within their inner conscience. They saw a golden chain of spiritual life connecting the existence of the heavens to the earth below. Recognizing this precious link allowed for the careful location of sites, graves, temples, public and private edifices. The influence of the landscape on buildings and their function forged physical and conceptual ideas of form and activity.

Feng Shui evolved from one principle, this being called the absolute nothing in which the "great absolute" was born. That is to say, Feng Shui delineates into two principles; a male - female relationship. The abstract principle of the "great absolute" gives birth to all existence. When it breathes, it creates a male principle; when resting or exhaling, produces the female principle. The heavens became the male image, and the earth the female power. Through the breathing cosmos, man, animal, plant and mineral were created.

The Chinese view the earth as the coarse material, whereas the heaven is an ideal. Everything that exists on earth is but a transient form of some

celestial agency. The beauty of nature that exists on earth is by the Chinese philosophy only reflections of ethereal beauty existing in the heavens. The sun is the ruling male image. His sister the moon is a reflection of the earth at night. The five planets, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury and Saturn, and their rotations, are the ever changing permutations of the five elements which they represent in nature: wood, fire, metal, water and earth. At night, the mountain peaks form the stars, and the rivers and oceans reflect the milky way.

The earth's crust has two magnetic currents, one male, the other female; favorable and unfavorable. These two currents are respectively called the Azure Dragon and the White Tiger. In order to bring luck to the site, the Azure Dragon must be to the left, while the White Tiger must be to the right. Such a site would look like a wide-mouthed letter "u". The inside point of junction is the luck-bringing side, where their energies cross. The elevations of such sites are illustrated by the high point of the hill being the male image, and the softly undulating ground being the female image.

An example of a favorable site is the situation of Canton City.

"It is contained in the very angle formed by two chains of hills running in gentle curves towards the Bogue, where they meet each other, forming a complete horseshoe. The chain of hills known as White Clouds represents the dragon, while the undulating ground on the other side of the river forms the White Tiger. The most favorable site for Canton is therefore the ground near the Northgates, where Tiger and Dragon run out to the left and right."

In areas where there is monotonous ground such as a level plane, or land with steep downslopes, no good site can be found. In areas where there is a steeply rising male image, the lucky site is located on an area having female characteristics, either visible to the eye or indicated on the compass in regard to celestial orientation, and numerical principles in nature.

In general any area having straight lines or an exceedingly rough appearance is thought to be dangerous to be built upon. Rocks or boulders that are themselves detached from the landscape prove the existence of evil breaths of nature. However, screens of plants and vegetation are used to camouflage such outcrops and therefore bring about beneficial influence. The planting of trees in Hong Kong by the British government was thought very wise by the Chinese, for Hong Kong's hillsides are strewn with an abundance of rocks and boulders.

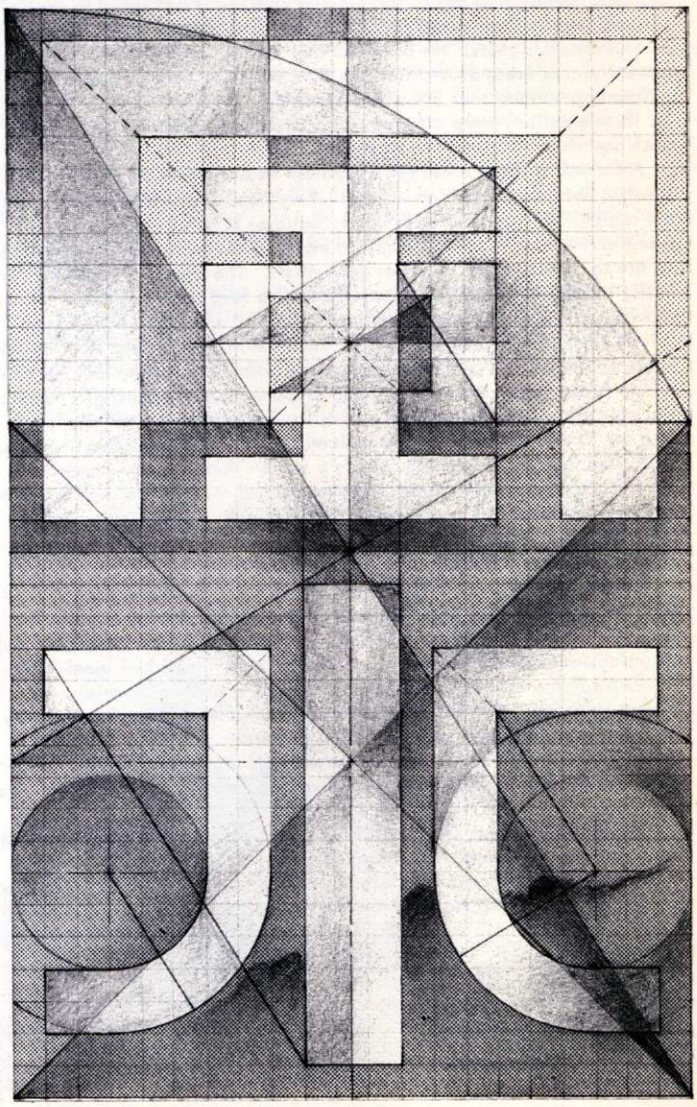
All evil influences may be fended off in some manner or counteracted. By the planting of trees around the house and a pond of fresh water in front, such adversities may be parried. A pagoda or a wooded hill answers the same purpose. One's path to his home should be curved and winding, representing life and warding off evil. Upon entry of the home, lions or dragons carved from burnt clay would safeguard its inhabitants.

The influence of the landscape upon man and his buildings, may be connected to his illnesses, violent deaths, or future successes. When hills and mountains that have forms of boats overturned, baskets, or steep sided plateaus, were built upon, misfortune would beset the builder and his future generations.

Though it appears that Feng Shui predicts only ruin and hardship, it does make mention to the fact that Heaven requires man to bring its products to absolute perfection. Neither heaven nor earth are complete within themselves, hence the natural objects and outlines of the earth and its landscape may be interfered with by man to achieve their completeness. Man may raise certain elevations of mountains, or change the course of waters to bring favorable energies upon himself. Visitors to China will see certain mountains which are naturally flat that have mounds erected upon them, or ones with peaks changed. All this is done to enable harmonious relationships to exist within the natural spirit of the environment.

In this manner, man expresses his foresight to turn the energies which are the influence of heaven and earth are ruled upon by man. Feng Shui taught man that in his own destiny, ultimately heaven and earth rule him.

Feng Shui: Based on the teachings of Chu Hsi of the Sung dynasty (AD 1126-1278) and adopted by modern Confucianism ■



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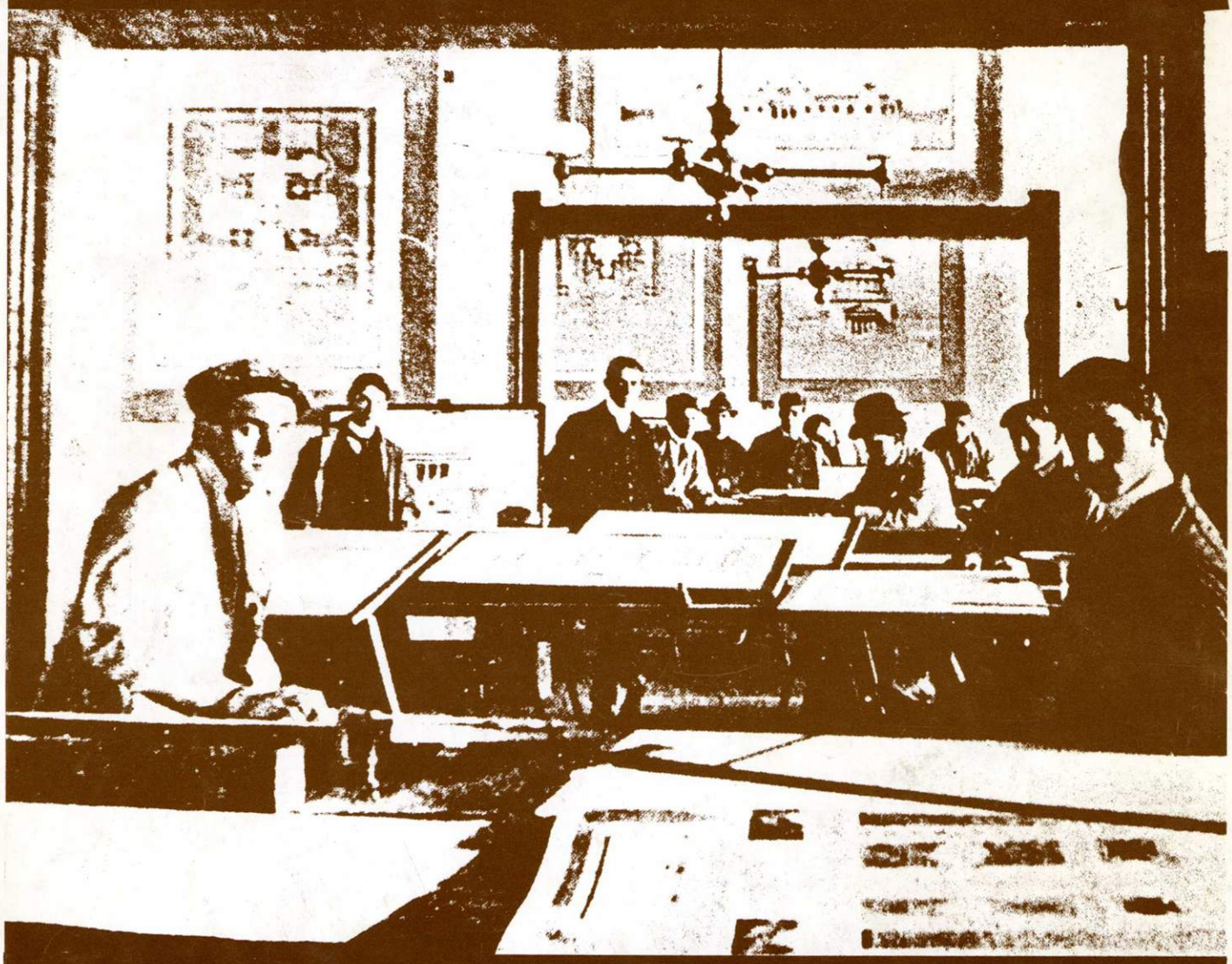

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